

The Secretary
Objecting to new Drayton South Mine
The Department of Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001
(On-line submission)

Mrs M Hartrick
[REDACTED]
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Dear Secretary

I work in the Hunter Valley and I am writing to object to the Drayton South mine.

I am objecting on health reasons, community degradation and property investment uncertainty.

My husband and I have felt like a mouse in a cage in recent times when searching for a property to be close to both our workplaces in the Upper Hunter. After much research we decided not to purchase property in a 'one industry town', a town with an uncertain future with the ups and downs of coal prices pushing property prices both up and then plummeting down just as quickly together with our own lack of confidence with mining expansion crawling into the town's proximity and unhealthy polluted air because of the town being ringed by mines.

When searching for a place to call home, you can look at the smothering ELs and current mine operations and speak to people to get a feel for areas where you should and shouldn't go, but you still don't know for sure. Why are there no lines on a map where mines can and can't go to ensure we will have certainty regarding property and work?

That was three years ago, and we now see a very unstable real estate market and retail sector in Muswellbrook which again, did not invoke confidence in property or business owners for long term investment. The air pollution is getting dirtier each year and now the mines want to extend closer into our community. I am now commuting 1.5 hours daily on New England Highway north to Aberdeen for my job which I have held for the past 9 years, just so that we can live in a cleaner environment with stable real estate futures and have a chance to address my health issues.

The catalyst to my own personal move was when I developed persistent bleeding ears and nose since coming to Muswellbrook 9 years ago. Dr Au (whom you would be familiar with) explained that 'living in this area as a result of constant dust particles and unclean air, you will no doubt have health issues in advancing age'. I did want to live in this increasingly affected area so we felt for this and other reasons that I have outlined, we were forced to relocate to a more sustainable, cleaner area. We relocated south of the valley as far as possible however the commute is lengthy and dangerous with all the commuting shift workers that I encounter on the long dark unlit highway. I still want to work in beautiful pristine Aberdeen but this arduous daily commute is not practicable for a woman such as myself in advancing years.

My terminally ill sister lived with us in Muswellbrook for 3 years until we moved. There are many people like my sister in a fragile health condition living in this over polluted environment of Muswellbrook and Singleton. My sister was forced to move also as she experienced adult onset asthma to add to her worsening condition, which she was told is due to the increase in pollutants from mines. Whilst living with us in the Hunter region she became reliant on medication and a nebuliser to aid her breathing 24/7. Since relocating to Thornton NSW her respiratory problems have improved. However, more open cut is only going to contribute to the cumulative health issues in Muswellbrook and further jeopardise the health of frail and aged members of our community.

Why is there not a moratorium on new mines until current mines exhaust their resource? I realise there are private mining interests involved with such decisions, but people's health and community impact are surely more important...well we would have thought so, ie considering the greater public good!

We only have to look at the devastating effect of destroying the soul of the little township of Camberwell to see the long term effects on that community, stripping the residents of their properties due to mining extensions. Surely these small townships have as much right to survive in the Hunter Valley as larger towns that service the mining industry?

We cannot afford to have the township of Bulga 'killed off' and relocated. A dear friend, recently widowed is now 'in no man's land' at Bulga - the mine will not buy her out of her 2nd generation family farm, she has no income. She has been forced to upstake and rent a property in Singleton township, whilst her property remains unsold. No non-mine investor wants to buy her property Why would they?

Can you or Drayton Mine tell me how this is in the public interest for the family who bears the brunt of the mine swallowing up their livelihoods and properties? Unable to sell her property, and with no income and very uncertain retirement plans as a result, my friend faces a bleak future. How do you suggest she and her fellow Bulgarians survive even in the short term knowing their appeals have been vetoed? Emotionally they have lost their heritage, stability in retirement and happiness, which is having profound impacts on their health. As in other small towns being carved off the ubiquitous mining map, this is unforgivable. We can anticipate more of this with the insipid mine creep between Muswellbrook and Denman up to Aberdeen. This threat now appears to be commonplace with no consideration of residents.

I object to another mine extension proposal for Drayton South. Why are we revisiting this issue even after a final decision against an extension was handed down from the PAC in previous hearings? The strain on members of these community areas is not acceptable, with more and more of us experiencing grief personally and trying to comfort affected loved ones affected by callous decisions by mines only interested in furthering their own investments. The government needs to step up and draw a line in the sand. Enough is enough.

Yours sincerely

M Hartrick